

The Legacy of the Night

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How a trauma spans
generation

Pieter van Groenewoud

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People today do not understand what cruelty is.
They consider it a kind of passion and think that the
deliberate torture of others gives a rush of pleasure. Everyday
cruelty is stupidity and a lack of imagination.

Love is the main secret of the world.
Forgive your enemies, not for your own sake but because
Love is more beautiful than hate.

Oscar Wilde

The Legacy of the Night.

This story is partly true and partly romanticized.

All characters in this novel were invented by the author and any resemblance to living or dead figures is purely coincidental. The appendix contains relevant information, literature, witness reports and support for victims.

For
People like Janine

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Chapter 1 Memories. Tom and Evelien

Chapter 2 Poisonous mushrooms

Chapter 3 Worthless rope. The cemetery. Herman

Chapter 4 A turtleneck. Wet buttocks

Chapter 5 Wedding album. Frustration

Chapter 6 Girl with freckles. Dictaphone

Chapter 7 Ambulance. A spanner in the works

Chapter 8 Balloons. A black box

Chapter 9 The history of Mother

Chapter 10 Wine. She talks. The revelation

Chapter 11 The Legacy. The riddle. Janine's poem

Epilogue How it went on

Finally

Appendices Witnesses

Help Agencies

The writer

Foreword

Japanese concentration camps

Although much has been written about what happened there, memories fade rapidly and are eventually forgotten. And let's be honest, because when you're sitting at the table together, this is the last subject you would want to discuss. Yet it should be mandatory at least once a year, because it's about us, the human beings.

It is incomprehensible that people can behave so bestially. It is also inconceivable that people can endure such humiliation and pain for a long time. Why does it still happen?

The answer to this question is given by psychologists who have discovered that people behave inhumanly in circumstances such as hatred, depression, orders, religion, mental abnormality and indoctrination. What we do not consider is the fact that many survivors of such a Japanese labor camp (and other concentration camps) live with a trauma until their death, some of which does not only affect them. A subconscious pleasure in transferring the pain suffered to a random person, usually a child, is an example of this.

The process of transferring not only causes relief from one's own pain but also fades the horrible memories.

The hearts of most people who have survived this hell are cold. Like the heart of Cora who has cast a cold shadow over her daughter whom she forced to take over the heavy burden. The innocent girl longs for only one thing and that is love. Janine was prepared to do anything for it.

This story is about her and the legacy

'I did nothing right in her eyes. It felt so strange, but I thought that was how it had to be because I was still very young and knew nothing about life on Earth. What I did learn quickly was the confirmation that man is inherently evil. And that was a damn wise and painful lesson. I was evil, and so was she.

The first time, I remember it very well, it was the Wednesday before my fifth birthday, she dragged me upstairs by my hair. In the bathroom I had to take off my clothes and bend over against the wall. Then she started screaming and hissing like a snake. I was not allowed to look back because otherwise I would get more punishment. I did not even know why I had to be punished.

It was the first time she whipped me and the most painful of all. She first hit my lower back three times and then my buttocks twice very hard. The rope of the whip cut my skin open with the last blow. I have never understood that. Why did that not happen with the first blow? She left me bleeding and left the bathroom with a smile on her face. I thought I made her happy.' Janine says. 'I really had no idea why I was being punished so severely. I still don't know.'

Tom sits there, dumbfounded, looking at her in silence. The blood has drained from his face. He simply can't believe what he's hearing. Preparing for something like this is completely unthinkable, let alone expecting it. He feels powerless and waits tensely for the rest of her story. Finally, she's overcome the hurdle.

After taking a sip of water, she continues her story about her horrible memories.

'I didn't see my mother as an aggressive beast because I didn't know any different. I accepted it and maybe she was right that I was a stupid girl.' She swallows as tears roll down her cheeks...

CHAPTER 1

Memories

Tom and Evelien

What happened before ...

'She was twenty-six at the time. I remember it well because I had bought myself a bag with forty candles at a supermarket. The cake to put thirty-two in never arrived. All forty are still in a drawer somewhere. That's what happens when you're alone and pretending to study for your future in a shabby attic. But of course, that's bullshit because it's the shittiest time of your life. Seducing girls, hanging around a bit uselessly, drinking and smoking make your youth fun. Sitting with your nose in books and learning things you'll never need again is a waste. You can always do that later, unless you jump in front of a train.

Anyway, the grey and persistent rainy weather was the reason I booked a seven-day holiday package to a sunny island. At the airport he bought a thick book by a Japanese author with a strange title. In retrospect it was only five days because you spend two days bored to death at an airport and then you are crammed into a plane like a sardine in seats that are always much too small and next to people who often have a big bottom. Upon arrival I quickly found the bar at the resort, and I found the creaking bed that had already experienced many wild adventures numb. The next morning, I walked straight from the shabby holiday flat to the beach.

The sun was shining brightly, and the wind was pleasant. I felt anything but great because drinking together has its disadvantages. And I simply cannot vomit voluntarily. In the distance I saw two sunbeds, one of which was occupied by a beautiful woman in a revealing bikini. I immediately forgot my physical discomfort and said something to her. I have forgotten that opening line, but it must have been a

good one because she had to laugh. When I asked what she did she replied that she was a lawyer. She immediately added that she was an unemployed lawyer. Then it was my turn to laugh. At first, she looked at me strangely but later she understood why. I told her briefly about my situation. At one point, like a bolt of lightning, we looked each other straight in the eye and fell in love immediately.' So says Tom.

Tom comes from a family of which he was the second and youngest child. He has a brother who is seven years older. Norbert. He was able to experience his parents leaving the working class because his father was promoted to lieutenant. When his brother left home, he became a spoiled child. He enjoyed that for five years. Two girlfriends later he knew everything about sex. He got his first kiss from Colette who followed him at school and who was already further along in the intimate area. When he was in a rowing boat with Mariette a year later, he could use that knowledge well. In short, a party that seemed to never end. It happened shortly after he received his final diploma.

A brown postcard from the Queen fell on the mat and about three months later he crawled into the soft sand dressed as a soldier. His service lasted fourteen months and at the farewell the sergeant remarked that he himself would be the greatest danger in wartime. The man did have a sense of humor, and he was right. Tom was a slow, sluggish and careless soldier.

After his service he had no idea what to do. He turned out to be reasonably good at tinkering and repairing computers, but he found something to do with building very interesting. And so, he chose a trial lesson in 'architecture'. And that didn't go so well because studying wasn't in his blood. He got so bored that he booked a cheap trip.

She was young, ambitious and still living with her parents. Her first job as a lawyer at a chemical company made her feel

that her life was turning into a rut. She often wandered around airports and flew all over the world. The work was always the same.

She dreamed of a week of lying in the sun. And that was strange because she wanted to do interesting things in her spare time, such as

see Nessie, that monster in Scotland, eat a croissant in Paris, walk on the Great Wall of China, see the Himalayas, and visit one of the Greek islands. Eventually she gave up because nothing had been crossed off that list.

The pay slip was then the only reason why she set an alarm clock. She thought it was too early and embarrassing to ask her boss for a few months of unpaid leave. After all, she had only been working there for a year.

Evelien decided to do things differently and twelve kilometers above the Pacific Ocean in a plane on the way to a business meeting in New York, she decided. Barely two weeks later, she was lying on the beach in the sun. She was reading a book with a bright yellow cover. And was completely unemployed.

With her slender and ringless fingers, she opened the book and started reading. Her friend had put this book in her bag when they had said goodbye to each other at the airport. Evelien wanted to get away without her for a while.

On page five, she suddenly felt a shiver all over her body. The cause was not the story, nor the noisy children who were having fun in the waves. It was a shadow that fell over her like a cold blanket, but she experienced it as an embrace by a warm-hearted spirit.

A nonchalant-looking slender man with almost black hair, aviator sunglasses on his nose, and in black swimming trunks was causing the shadow. She guessed his height, saw two rows of neat ivory guards behind sensually full lips, blue eyes, and on his wrist a cheap watch with a steel strap. He

had hands with beautifully slender fingers. The slightly lanky man started by asking if she was married. She laughed and said that he should do his best to find out. He sat down in the chair next to her and quite quickly there was a relaxed atmosphere and after a waiter had come by with drinks, they became curious about each other and asked one question after another. She appeared to be a better questioner than he was.

At a certain point they looked at each other and she gave the first kiss. The flame ignited when she sat down next to him and willingly surrendered herself to Eros.

The sound of the waves washing up on the beach, the salty wind and the smell of sweat woke them up the next day. In her bed, in her suite, and they were both naked and had only slept a few hours after having made love in many positions. She noticed from her body that something had happened that she doubted was real. Until his departure, she had two days left, they spent together and knew at the airport that they would miss each other. And that happened.

A week later, they were sitting together in Tom's attic room. Their love was real and seemed to be based on mutual dislikes and interests, and they were fond of scandals. His dreaminess, at first, she called it slouching, she found relaxing. For him, she was the incentive to finish his studies. With the aim of being able to move into a real house as soon as she had found a job. Looking ahead and fantasizing without limits. She was good at that. He lived from day to day and studied in a room the size of a laundry room, where the only daylight came through a plastic window that he kept bumping his head against when he got up from his 'desk'. It was also a laundry room and his desk an ironing board. His home was an attic under a sloping roof of a single-family house in a leafy neighborhood of a large city. The space

consisted of a room with a bed where two people is a challenge, a wardrobe from a Swedish company in which his clothes had to make room for her clothes and many women's articles. He moved his things to the laundry room. His study.

Opposite the bed was an old two-seater sofa with a low wooden coffee table in between. Two orange plastic folding chairs hung on the wall. The only window faced west. The kitchen consisted of a camping table with a blue two-burner butane stove. Under a sink were two plastic crates with two pans. Behind a door under the sloping roof were a sink, shower cubicle and a toilet. The wooden floor was bare and a Persian rug from her mother lay by the door. It was quite cozy, except that it was extremely noisy.

Once a month they walked with a book and a full laundry bag to Van Duren, a laundry. While enjoying terribly dirty coffee and the noise of six washing machines, you could talk to the neighbors there. The moments when you found the underwear of a neighbor across the street in your basket were hilarious. They read aloud from the book, all the stories of Jane Austin, and had funny discussions. She could read much better than he could. He kept getting confused with all the names and thought the relationships that Jane could describe so well were just stupid.

She was happy with him but thought that the stay in the attic should not last long and that is why she applied for jobs like crazy and was often away. Her parents did not like their daughter's relationship at all. They thought he did not fit in with their environment and daughter. Evelien did not care and packed her suitcase and therefore quickly moved in with him.

Tom earned money at a bistro as an assistant chef, which meant washing dishes more often than cooking. He found the dynamics in a professional kitchen incredibly interesting. He sometimes doubted and thought that he might have made the

wrong choice. She convinced him with a simple argument. You are sweet but lack talent, she said.

Evelien came from a family and was an only child. Her father was a judge, and her mother a pro bono lawyer. She grew up in a safe and warm environment and graduated from high school without any obstacles or mediocre grades. Not surprisingly, she then chose to study law, which she obtained at a normal pace and with the usual parties in between, in which she often played the leading role. She was a willing prey for men.

That is why she was a welcome guest in their local pub because she was not only pretty and funny but also knew exactly how to play men like a seal with a ball. Evelien was sensitive to small things.

When he proudly put an overcooked pasta on the table, divided the remains of rancid red wine between two glasses and lit a candle, she could have melted. She loved the simplicity and knew immediately that he was not a cook. Afterwards they spat the wine in the sink, but okay, it was the gesture that mattered. Tom is a Taurus and has the enviable ability not to get fat. Bags of chips, croquettes and meatballs seem to disappear into a black hole without him gaining an ounce. A Taurus that gets going slowly, but once he gets going, he can't be stopped. He needs a red rag. And that was Evelien, who was still completely unemployed but was busy applying for jobs.

She received offers, but didn't take any seriously. Tom got the feeling that she wanted to be with him. But that was a mistake because she knew exactly what she wanted. And she got it.

Because on a rainy afternoon an envelope with the sender M.G.F.H. MaJan Advocatorum Internationalis landed on the

Persian rug. The job she had been waiting for. Dressed neatly in a suit, which suited her perfectly, she came running up the stairs waving the signed contract. He was already waiting for her at the door. And only she could run up a flight of stairs in an exciting way. With the impressive salary, buying a real house and a car was within reach. A month later, when her probation was over, they lay on their backs staring at the ceiling after a passionate lovemaking session. Then they decided. On a Saturday, when it was finally dry and a watery sun was shining, they were sitting at an estate agents to sign the purchase contract for a house with a large garden. They moved a month later.

A semi-detached house with red roof tiles and a garage. Bordering a park next to an old low building with social housing flats.

They slowly filled the house with furniture and that went without bloodshed because they respected each other's taste. Finally, they bought a young but second-hand Audi, dark blue, which suited a lawyer well. They were very happy and wanted to get married.

The Jewish law firm was active in a rather shady world. She was appointed as a private lawyer for a few very wealthy clients whom she had to assist and advise in all kinds of areas. These often-concerned matters such as various conflicts and family law. She had to sign for absolute discretion. She said that one of the cases had to do with the Ha-Mossad le-Modiin. She was not allowed to say more. It made him shudder because this branch of the Israeli secret service is not known for being gentle.

She named her files after flowers. She loved mediating in family disputes and worked long days, often being away from home.

She often didn't come home until the next morning. And she always had a dictaphone with her because that was her external memory, she said.

When she nestled in bed next to him in the early morning, she smelled good. She slept deeply with a smile on her face. And both her phone and dictaphone were always on the bedside table.

At work she was dressed in a white silk blouse and a dark blue suit, and black pumps. They didn't see each other that much, which was good for Tom because he had to prepare his final project. After a dinner in a restaurant, they had come to an agreement. They were going to get married, in silence.

He in a combination of blue trousers and a checked blazer and she in a kind of Mexican dress decorated with corn cobs and sunflowers. They got married in an uninviting grey and especially damp town hall, on Monday morning.

Later that day they informed family and friends, because they thought they were safe then. But they were wrong. Later that evening, they had become extremely horny after drinking a bottle of red Merlot when the doorbell rang. Evelien, half undressed, opened the door and found a taxi driver who told them that he had been ordered to pick them up. He was not allowed to say where. They just had to come along.

When they stopped at a catering establishment a little later, their suspicions were confirmed.

Friends and family had organized a party for the young couple in no time and they had even thought of a photographer. A young lady with freckles and dressed in a very short skirt with a white top. It was a fantastic party and lasted until the early hours.

Afterwards Evelien thanked the photographer in a very friendly way. That this woman with freckles could take pictures was confirmed when they received the photo album and found rather unusual pictures of mainly Evelien.

When the last grains of rice had disappeared from their clothes they resumed normal life in a new house with a healthy financial basis. Only Tom still had to pass his architecture training. Explaining his paper orally in front of the examination committee was the last hurdle.

He wanted to become an architect. Designing houses in unusual shapes in the conviction that a person cannot live happily between four walls. As if you must get used to your last home, a coffin. A life on the way to death.

And then finally the day had arrived that he had to defend his paper in front of the examination committee. Nervously he stood behind a lectern and investigated the room which was filled with professors and students. He caught a glimpse of his brother. Evelien was there too of course. The rector started his speech seriously which ended with a joke and then gave the floor to Tom.

He started a bit clumsily with a short introduction but soon he got the hang of it and confidently sent his explanation to the end. He answered the questions asked by the committee without thinking for a moment. When the rector stood up and together with the members of the examination committee left the room for consultation, there was a moment of silence. Tom took a sip of water and waited with some tension for the results. It took some time before the examination committee returned to the room and the somewhat older professor, rector of the University, took the floor with a stern face. He started with a quote from Cicero and then looked at Tom with a cautious smile on his face.

He built up the tension by evaluating the five subjects in stages. Finally, the rector told and to great relief that these were assessed as sufficient. The tension increased when he started the practical assignment. He went into it extensively and praised the originality.

The principal looked at the committee for a moment and then at Tom, who was waiting for the final grade with sweaty hands. In order not to keep him in suspense any longer, a high grade was announced. He had passed.

The diploma was signed and sealed by all the members of the examination committee and finally by the principal.

The applause that followed was a reward for his years of effort and perseverance. And with a little help from his girlfriend.

Tom proudly waved his bull. He saw that Evelien was standing at the door. She blew a kiss and left shortly afterwards because she still had to work. The clock above the door that slowly closed showed twelve past four. Tom was surrounded by fellow students and congratulated by the many people present. It took an hour before he realized what had happened to him. He had achieved the result that was still considered impossible. And he knew damn well who had contributed to that. Evelien, his Evelien. Cheerfully he took his bike and rode home whistling. He was looking forward to the evening and hoped that she would come home soon because he was longing for her.

It was half past five when he was busy setting the table at home. A spotless white tablecloth, dark blue porcelain plates, gold-colored cutlery and with beautiful champagne glasses. Two silver candlesticks with black candles that she had bought. Everything was ready to celebrate the festive moment together with her. He ordered the food from the Chinese, and it consisted of several dishes that they both loved. It would be delivered between nine and half past nine. Evelien would certainly be home from work by then. At half past nine the doorbell rang. The Chinese! Tom thought on his way to the front door. When he opened the door, the color drained from his face. Pale as a sheet he asked the police officers what was going on. He thought very

quickly and tried to find the answer before the officer did. Driving too fast? Parking ticket paid too late.

The officer looked at the ground and shook his head and asked if they could come in. Now Tom knew that something other than a violation had happened. This must be serious. An accident. Evelien.

The officer then told him the terrible news. Tom felt anxious and could not believe it. The doorbell rang again. The Chinese with a friendly face and a large plastic bag. Tom paid the boy and put the food in the kitchen. Then he walked back to the living room.

The officers then told him the most necessary and asked if he needed help. In shock he looked at the officers who did their best to show compassion. After the two officers had left, he sat staring into space. Intuitively he wanted to pick up the phone and just call someone, but he had no idea who. He closed his eyes and repeated the officer's words in his mind.

-A particularly well-aimed bullet, from a small German-made weapon with a caliber of .22, had ended Evelien's life. She was alone in the building. The perpetrator must have followed her and entered the office without being noticed. Strangely enough, there was no trace of damage or breaking and entering, which the police found extremely suspicious. There were no cameras in the building due to the privacy of the clients. The investigation is in full swing. -

Hysterical and in tears, he called his brother. An hour later, the two brothers were sitting on the couch, crying. Norbert did not leave his brother alone and took him to his house. Tom did not sleep that night and left for his house early in the morning.

The Chinese meal was still untouched on the counter. He looked at it, opened a package and ate some cold noodles with peanut sauce. He put the rest in the fridge. Before he

closed the fridge door, he grabbed two cans of beer. He drank them one after the other. What the police officer had said kept bothering him. The image of Evelien blowing a kiss on his hand during his graduation ceremony is burned into his retina. His heart is broken and has become intensely cold. Evelien has just disappeared from his life. Just like that.

At ten o'clock, the police called to say that he was expected at the hospital morgue to identify her. After he had freshened up, he walked to the garage and got his bike. The Audi was still at her office. He cried all the way to the hospital. At the bike shed, he put his bike against the wall and walked inside. At the reception, he was told that he was expected. With lead in his shoes, he entered the room where he was met by a plainclothes officer and a doctor. Behind the men was a stainless-steel table with a white sheet draped over it. The doctor lifted a corner of the sheet so that Tom could see her. She seemed so peaceful lying there. As if she would suddenly jump up and kiss him. But she didn't. He gently stroked her hair and whispered something. He closed his eyes and tried to say something, but he couldn't. She was gone, forever.

The doctor put the sheet back and accompanied him to the exit. He cycled in a roundabout way, because he wanted to breathe some fresh air because he knew he had to arrange a lot of unpleasant things, such as the cremation and informing immediate family and friends. He started with what he dreaded most. Calling her parents. They reacted with disbelief and her mother immediately started to curse him. Tom broke off the conversation immediately. Later, her father was at the door and offered sincere apologies and help. Other family members and friends reacted as they should.

Evelien's cremation was attended by many people, and Tom didn't know everyone. His parents, all their friends were there, her colleagues and of course her parents. But

also, the young woman with freckles. Her father spoke a few nice words after Tom had broken off his speech in tears.

A few days later, Tom had become curious about the investigation that the police had started and called the detective department. He got a nice officer on the phone who let him wait for a moment. Then the man told him that he had no news from the investigation team yet, but that cameras in the street had spotted a black Porsche with a foreign license plate that was not legible because of a tree branch. The officer added that it was not an exception in that neighborhood and therefore would not be included in the investigation. Because Tom did not understand that he asked what the man meant. A Porsche, he said. It is a neighborhood with stinking rich residents.

A week later Tom left for Scotland with his Evelien. After a long drive through the mountains, he had arrived at his destination. On a rickety wooden jetty at a lake with pitch-black water he braved the cold wind. He took off his gloves and with trembling hands he unscrewed the lid of a metal pot and said: 'darling, here you are. Where you wanted to be so much. Unfortunately, we say goodbye here. You will meet Nessie, because if there is anyone who can do that, it is you.' Then he tilted the urn so that the ashes spread over the dark water.

After a short flight and late in the evening he gets out of a taxi and opens the door and enters an ice-cold house. The curtains remain closed for days. Curious neighbors try to approach him, but he does not allow them. Nine days later, on a rainy Wednesday afternoon, he appeared outside to do some shopping. A neighbor saw him and was shocked. He looked unshaven and very bad. And as if he hadn't suffered enough, two weeks later a bailiff rang the doorbell with the

unpleasant message that Evelien's life insurance did not cover the entire mortgage, and that Tom had the choice of paying the remainder at once or doing so with a new mortgage loan. He chose the latter but was disappointed. The bank did not want to give him a loan because he had no job. There was no other option than to sell the house. He was given three months to do so, otherwise a foreclosure auction would take place.

With the bailiff's writ, a diploma, a depression and a bottle of spirits in an empty and cold house, he then continued to process his grief. Friends were worried, seriously worried. But no matter how hard they tried, Tom slid into an endless darkness. In the meantime, buyers had come forward and it looked as if the damage would be limited. He even had a nice amount left and his brother offered him temporary shelter. After the transfer Tom could often be found in the pub and later, he sat on the same stool getting drunk from opening time to closing time. This worried his brother and friends who repeatedly asked him to seek help. He refused and denied his addiction. As a result, he went to the pub even more often. There was no escape, and his brother had had enough. They had a heated argument in which his brother then put him on the spot. Either stop drinking or get out of my house. Tom didn't care and left his brother's house in the middle of the night.

When Norbert found Tom's bed unslept the next morning he called the police. After hours of searching, they found Tom on a bench at a train station. He was sleeping under a few old newspapers and had no shoes on. He was brought to Norbert. His wife took care of Tom for a few days until he had recovered a bit. A serious talk with his brother and a doctor managed to convince him to stop drinking and seek help at a center that specializes in helping people with alcohol problems. Tom denied having an alcohol problem and